Tim Dear Processing Walnuts c 1925

Reflections

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September 24 2025

This photo of my grandfather, Tim Dear, is from page eight of the *Snapshot Album*—his high school photo album, with the word *Snapshot* embossed right on the cover. He's at the center, with what I believe may be his older brother watching in the background.

The image itself was in poor shape, but still strikingly compelling—both for the subject matter and for the sense of time it carries. It shows Tim inside a dark barn or shed, the back windows streaming with bright light, not the easiest scene to photograph. He appears to be cracking walnuts, with trays and frames stacked neatly behind him. On the same page in the album, another photo shows a box of walnuts set against a perfectly stacked cord of wood. In the Dear family, no one needed to explain what a cord of wood was. They knew exactly how to measure it and the right way to stack it. I remember long conversations about that very point—an important standard of pride and precision, passed down through the generations.

The photo has taken on an almost cloud-like texture—partly from age, partly from the heavy dust-removal filter I used to bring it back. Even stylized, it remains a beautiful capture of a moment suspended in time: two young men working together inside one of the outbuildings on the Dear farm.

The Dear family owned one of the largest, if not the largest, orchards in the Oakland, Oregon area and were known as prominent farmers. Much of that legacy passed through Tim. His stories were vivid, rich, and a regular part of Sunday dinners.

I don't remember him ever talking about harvesting walnuts, though walnuts were always present in our lives. My grandmother Blanche regularly bought or gathered them from an orchard up at Cape Horn, keeping raw walnuts on hand for cooking and baking. I remember u-picking walnuts with her myself. One Christmas, Tim received a hand-carved walnut cracker – a screw like apparatus. That kind of self-sufficiency was passed down through the generations—and it's what makes this photo so meaningful to me now. Those small details can be overwhelming.